

March 7, 2021  
Sunday Morning Service  
Series: Acts  
Community Baptist Church  
643 S. Suber Road  
Greer, SC 29650  
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## THE CHURCH'S FIRST SERMON Acts 2:14-36

Up to this point in Luke's story about the acts of the Holy Spirit, we have been learning how Christ was laying the foundation for building His Church. He met with many and various of His followers for forty days in order to prove conclusively that He had risen from the dead according to the Scriptures. He had given final instruction about how His followers were supposed to continue His ministry of teaching about the kingdom of heaven. He clearly expected those who had been with Him and observed His ministry to serve as eyewitnesses of the gospel. Jesus instructed the witnesses to go back to Jerusalem and wait until the Holy Spirit came as He promised would be the case.

The followers no doubt were shocked when their leader, Master, King suddenly, miraculously disappeared into the sky without warning. Rather than be discouraged, the little band followed their Master's instruction. They returned to Jerusalem, they met together continually in the upper room for prayer and taking care of other business (like replacing Judas), and they were frequently at the temple praising God.

This process went on for ten days when also very suddenly and without warning the Holy Spirit came upon the faithful followers. He came with clear signs and indications that something unique had just taken place.

Now Jesus's witnesses were ready to do the work of witnessing. Now they were prepared and equipped to do what Jesus intended for them to do. So what is the first thing the Church did when they were equipped and ready to get to work? They did not present a concert complete with lights and smoke. They did not hold a symposium on

the great needs of society. They did not present a psychologist to offer platitudes of therapeutic moralism. They did not have a play or roundtable discussion or create a specialized program for special needs represented in the Church.

The very first thing the Church did when God the Holy Spirit gave them the green light was to preach a sermon. And that sermon was offered by a guy who many would consider to be a bit of a loser. Peter was, according to the assessment of people in the know, "an ignorant and unlearned fisherman."

It is true that Peter didn't always act like he was on top of things. Even though he was privileged to be taught by God the Son Himself, Peter tended to say dumb things like, "You don't need to go to Jerusalem and suffer." This was the guy who told the damsel who accused him of being a Christ follower, "I don't know the man." He, like the other apostles, had run away and hid in terror while Jesus was tortured and killed. Peter had stumbled all over himself when Jesus pinned him down about the sincerity of his love.

But something happened to Peter in the fifty days since Christ's resurrection. As mentioned, Jesus had taken him aside and allowed Peter to confess and renew his love for the Master. It is true that Jesus had, at some point, met personally with Peter (1 Corinthians 15:5). We don't know all that Jesus said in that meeting or how much it impacted Peter. It is obvious in the opening words of this account from Luke that Peter was suddenly the leader of the band of followers. It is also true that when Peter the rock confessed that Jesus is the Christ, that Jesus promised to build the church on this "rock."

So what is the first thing the restored, regenerated, Spirit-filled leader of the Church did when God the Holy Spirit empowered him? He preached! He preached an expositional sermon from various Old Testament texts. He preached the Word! In fact, counting Peter's first statements about how and why they needed to replace Judas, Luke recorded in *Acts* no less than eight sermons by Peter. He also included five sermons by Paul (not including four defenses before authorities). Luke also recorded a sermon by Stephen and one by James.

The earliest history of the Church is replete with sermons. It is Christ's way of building His Church. In this first sermon of the new church, Peter appealed to and explained Old Testament Scripture. Then he applied the Scripture to the current setting and especially to

his listeners. In conclusion, Peter did what too many pastors would never do. Beyond any doubt the preacher identified his listeners as guilty before the God they offended. His sermon is a good model to follow.

### **Explanation of the Miracle (vv.14-21).**

Peter began this sermon by explaining what the miracle was not (vv.14-15). He stood before the crowd and issued a call to listen. *But Peter, standing with the eleven, lifted up his voice and addressed them, “Men of Judea and all who dwell in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and give ear to my words (v.14).*

Peter spoke boldly. That is evident in the words that describe how he *lifted up his voice and addressed them*. It means that Peter spoke plainly and boldly. There are two Greek words here interpreted as *lifted up* and *addressed* both of which mean to cry out or to shout. Obviously, Peter needed to raise his voice to be heard over the clamor of the great crowd.

But raising his voice and shouting out was also a sign of great confidence. Seven weeks earlier this guy was quivering in a dark corner in an undisclosed location fearing the religious authorities in Jerusalem. Seven weeks earlier he was afraid of a little servant girl. But now Peter spoke with authority. It is as though he cried out to the people, “Listen to my words because I am going to tell you something you need to know.” Did he forget that the religious authorities, the experts in Mosaic Law, the leaders of the Sanhedrin were present in force? Did he forget that there were devout, serious students of God’s law from all over the known world in Jerusalem for the feast? Did Peter forget that he was just an uneducated fisherman?

Peter’s actions remind us that when the Holy Spirit of God energizes all the knowledge Jesus has given us about Himself, we can speak boldly and confidently. When we are confident about the Word of God, the opinions of others do not dissuade us. When we have genuine faith in the Bible, we should be able to speak about it with bold confidence.

Peter’s opening words in the sermon were a logical explanation of a very unusual circumstance. *For these men are not drunk, as you suppose, since it is only the third hour of the day (v.15).* Maybe we

could call this his introduction to the sermon. It was catchy and useful. In it the preacher confidently, kindly refuted the false accusation that Christ’s followers were drunk. He was not going to get bogged down in a lengthy argument of “you said, I said.” He simply refuted the accusation and then moved on to explain what really happened.

This is a good example of how one of Paul’s statements about the qualification for elder works. *He must hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught, so that he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine and also to rebuke those who contradict it (Titus 1:9).* Paul not only taught the principle, but illustrated it. *For he powerfully refuted the Jews in public, showing by the Scriptures that the Christ was Jesus (Acts 18:28).*

Having briefly explained what the miracle was not, Peter went on to give some detail in explaining what the miracle was (vv.16-20). Here the preacher went immediately to Scripture preaching that this astonishing event was actually the fulfillment of Scripture. *But this is what was uttered through the prophet Joel: “And in the last days it shall be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams; even on my male servants and female servants in those days I will pour out my Spirit, and they shall prophesy” (vv.16-18).*

This was direct quote of Scripture (Joel 2:28-32). It is doubtful that Peter happened to have a scroll of Joel in his hands at the moment. No, he knew this Scripture in his heart and mind so that as soon as the miracle happened, Peter had an explanation. He preached that what the people were experiencing was the coming of the Holy Spirit. He explained that Joel had promised many years later that the Holy Spirit coming in this special way with special signs was an event in *the last days*. God had declared through the prophet hundreds of years earlier that He would pour out His Spirit. When He did there would be astonishing signs like sons and daughters prophesying, visions, dreams, servants prophesying.

Was that an accurate explanation of what was happening on Pentecost? Well, yes, God did pour out the Holy Spirit. And men and women were prophesying, that is, declaring God’s message. In fact, they were declaring the mighty works of God in the native languages

of the visitors at Pentecost (2:6). Then it must be that Pentecost was the “last days.” Yes, to some extent it was and is. But not everything Joel prophesied was coming to pass at that time.

This was not complete fulfillment of Scripture. The rest of Joel’s story is: *And I will show wonders in the heavens above and signs on the earth below, blood, and fire, and vapor of smoke; the sun shall be turned to darkness and the moon to blood, before the day of the Lord comes, the great and magnificent day (vv.19-20)*. These things did not happen in connection with Pentecost. What do we do, how do we explain the absence of these other things? Do we dismiss that part of the promise as a mistake on Joel’s part? Do we spiritualize the promise and try to explain that these things did happen but not in a realistic way, just in the hearts and minds of the apostles?

The correct explanation is that the rest of Joel’s promise will happen in connection with “the day of the Lord.” As we mentioned in the recent past, the “Day of the Lord” can be a very long period of time, including many different events. And the Day of the Lord can have multiple applications. Therefore, the coming of the Holy Spirit is part of the last days events. And so is the rapture, the Great Tribulation, the battle of Armageddon, the coming of Christ to establish the Kingdom.

Here we need to offer a word about the nature of prophecy fulfilled. It is not unusual for a prophecy to be fulfilled in stages over a period of time. That can be illustrated by the way we look at mountain ranges. As we look out across the horizon of the Rocky Mountains, for example, we see the peaks of other mountains. That would be like seeing the various aspects of the prophecy. What we don’t see are the valleys between the peaks. These are like long periods of history between the fulfillment of one part of a prophecy and the fulfillment of the rest of the prophecy. We are now living in the long valley called the Church age, between the mountain peak of Pentecost and the mountain peak of the rapture.

Next, Peter taught what this miracle portended (v.21). *“And it shall come to pass that everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved” (v.21)*. God gave this miraculous sign along with the Holy Spirit to encourage people to call on the Lord. All the unusual events and signs of the early days of the Church were to call attention

to God’s new work. The Church is on earth to be witnesses to the good news that Christ has won salvation from sin through His sacrifice. The miracle signs in the early days drew attention to the gospel so that people would listen to the message.

The good news about the message is that God offers salvation to all who call upon the Lord’s name. The mighty works of God that the Spirit-filled people were declaring is that He will forgive the sins of all who cry out to Him for mercy. That is the good news Peter declared in the first sermon of the Church.

### **A Frightening Reality (vv.22-36).**

Having explained the miracle, what it was not and what it was, Peter the preacher turned to appeal to known truth about Jesus (vv.22-24). He affirmed that his listeners knew Jesus by His works. *“Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God with mighty works and wonders and signs that God did through him in your midst, as you yourselves know” (v.22)*.

The many miracles and authoritative teaching of Jesus were not done in darkness or secret. It was so obvious that all Israel had been impacted just fifty days previously. It seems likely that there would have been very few people present who had not heard of Jesus the miracle worker. But knowing about Jesus’s astounding and kind works is not sufficient. Still, the issue is that Jesus is more than an excellent teacher who went about doing nice things.

The listeners had no doubt heard about Jesus’s miracles. But they needed to know Jesus resurrected. *“This Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men. God raised him up, loosing the pangs of death, because it was not possible for him to be held by it” (vv.23-24)*. God’s plan delivered Jesus to lawless men. God’s plan allowed the Jewish people to kill Jesus by the hands of lawless men. God’s plan required that Jesus rise from the dead. That is the keystone to the Good News. Jesus risen and seated at the right hand of God the Father in heaven is the critical reality of the gospel.

To make that point sufficiently clear Peter appealed to Scripture (vv.25-28). The previous prophecy of Scripture promised Christ would face the cross with confidence. *For David says*

concerning him, “I saw the Lord always before me, for he is at my right hand that I may not be shaken” (v.25). That is almost an exact quote from Psalm 16:8: *I have set the LORD always before me; because he is at my right hand, I shall not be shaken.*

Hundreds of years before Christ’s crucifixion, David promised in Scripture that He would face the torture and death with gladness. *Therefore my heart was glad, and my tongue rejoiced; my flesh also will dwell in hope. For you will not abandon my soul to Hades, or let your Holy One see corruption. You have made known to me the paths of life; you will make me full of gladness with your presence (vv.26-28).* Again that is almost a direct quote of Psalm 16:9-11: *Therefore my heart is glad, and my whole being rejoices; my flesh also dwells secure. For you will not abandon my soul to Sheol, or let your holy one see corruption. You make known to me the path of life; in your presence there is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore.*

That is what the Bible says about Christ’s crucifixion and resurrection. “So what?” the sceptic replies. That is when the preacher makes a direct application of Scripture (vv.29-36). He explains how the Scripture applied to David and Jesus. The promise did not speak about David. That was impossible because David’s body was in the tomb down the road. *“Brothers, I may say to you with confidence about the patriarch David that he both died and was buried, and his tomb is with us to this day” (v.29).* Evidence was clear, right in their city, that David wasn’t talking about himself. His body was in the tomb. His body saw corruption.

Rather, God had given David a promise about a relative who would fulfill this promise. *Being therefore a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him that he would set one of his descendants on his throne (v.30).* God had sworn an oath to David regarding his descendant. We are familiar with that oath and can read it in 2 Samuel. *“When your days are fulfilled and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring after you, who shall come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever” (2 Samuel 7:12-13).*

It is true that Solomon, descendant of David, built the house for God’s name. But it is not true that Solomon’s throne was established

forever. His own son Rehoboam wrecked the kingdom. Therefore, God’s promise to David had to go way beyond Solomon to someone else. It must mean that there would be a future relative of David who would fulfill this amazing promise about not staying dead.

Yes, David’s body was still in the tomb, but Jesus’s body was not in the tomb. It had been in the tomb. Some of the people present were responsible for putting it there. So Peter concluded that in his prophecy, David, *foresaw and spoke about the resurrection of the Christ, that he was not abandoned to Hades, nor did his flesh see corruption. This Jesus God raised up, and of that we all are witnesses (vv.31-32).*

Oh! Solomon only partially fulfilled God’s oath to David. The greater than David was the descendant of David – Jesus Christ. His body was not abandoned in the grave, nor did it go through corruption. In fact, God raised up Jesus, descendent of David, who will come again to reign as eternal King of kings. All of the disciples who had been meeting for ten days were witnesses of this fact.

Wow, that was pretty good reasoning, pretty logical. Someone in the crowd might think, “That was a good appeal to our Scriptures.” Maybe there was something to this. Probably that was a better sermon than most of the people had heard in the synagogue in years. Oh, but Peter wasn’t done! He needed to close the sermon by teaching how the Scripture applied to the listeners.

They witnessed the ongoing work of Jesus in the coming of the Holy Spirit. *“Being therefore exalted at the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he has poured out this that you yourselves are seeing and hearing” (v.33).* Jesus of Nazareth did not just rise from the grave. God the Father, God of Israel, exalted Him to His right hand, the position of authority. And with that authority, Jesus received the promise of the Holy Spirit. And now every one of the listeners was eyewitness to the fact that Jesus had kept His promise and sent the Holy Spirit to His people.

So what does that mean to the citizen or visitor in Jerusalem who happened to be listening to Peter’s sermon? The conclusion is the point to which Peter has been driving in the sermon. They needed to believe that Jesus was at the Father’s right hand. *“For David did not ascend into the heavens, but he himself says, ‘The Lord said to my*

*Lord, Sit at my right hand, until I make your enemies your footstool”* (vv.34-35).

Peter quoted more Scripture – another psalm of David. *The LORD says to my Lord: “Sit at my right hand, until I make your enemies your footstool” (Psalm 110:1)*. Obviously, this could not refer to David. It has to be a reference to David’s Lord. Jesus is the one who ascended to heaven. And to Jesus, God the Father gave the promise of making all His enemies His footstool. This means that everyone who opposes Jesus will be forced into utter subjection to Him. Paul described it like this: *So that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father (Philippians 2:10-11)*.

They needed to admit their sin of crucifying God the Son. *“Let all the house of Israel therefore know for certain that God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified” (v.36)*. Jesus of Nazareth is Lord and Christ. That means that He is the eternal judge to whom everyone will answer. Every person will stand before His judgment throne to be judged for eternity according to their works. And by the way – “You crucified Him.”

Was that any way to end a sermon? How did Peter expect to win friends and influence people? Surely everyone who heard him that day was offended. That would be especially true in light of the fact that most of those people were not even present at the crucifixion. They had nothing to do with it.

That is true, but like us, their sins were the reason Jesus of Nazareth hung on the cross. We are all guilty of being the cause of the death of Christ. But God, in His longsuffering and patience, turns the death of Christ to the redemption of sinners. We who confess our sins and place our complete faith in Christ’s finished work alone for salvation receive forgiveness of sins and the promise of eternal life. Oh, and by the way, over 3,000 people who should have been offended were miraculously born again to eternal life. God’s ways are certainly not our ways.